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ABSTRACT

In spite of the efforts of the Ford Foundation's Great Cities School Improvement Program in ten large city school systems to provide quality education to children and youth from the ghettos of America's cities, this problem remains unsolved. Cities have never been able to do an adequate job of educating the poor, the immigrants, and the minorities. The public objects to the schools' disciplinary problems and failure to provide basic skills education. Schools and teachers are reluctant to admit their own culpability and inadequacies, preferring to place the blame on sociological factors. Teachers must insist on high standards for their students, but parents, citizens and students must also be held accountable for the quality of education. Parents, by supporting tax levies, encouraging community support, and supporting staff members, can help to increase the quality of education. Educators must reeducate the public about the value of education to society. Schools must direct themselves not only towards teaching basic skills, but also towards preparing students to support themselves in the society and towards instilling a sense of compassion for other human beings. In the final analysis, however, until the schools, community and home can develop a consensus on educational goals, partnership for progress in education will have no meaning. (WI)

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"URBAN EDUCATION: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE"

PAPER PRESENTED TO

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URBAN EDUCATION: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

IN 1960, THE FORD FOUNDATION SELECTED 10 MAJOR AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS AS TARGETS FOR AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAM. THE CITIES WERE BUFFALO, CHICAGO, CLEVELAND, DETROIT, MILWAUKEE, PITTSBURGH, PHILADELPHIA, SAN FRANCISCO AND ST. LOUIS. THE GREAT CITIES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AS THE FORD PROJECT CAME TO BE KNOWN HAD SEVERAL GOALS AND PURPOSES:[1]

1. RAISING LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT.
2. INTENSIVE IN-SERVICE EDUCATION.
3. ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES FOR PUPILS.
4. PARENT PARTICIPATION.
5. REDUCE THE IMPACT OF CLASS AS DEFINED BY SES, RACE AND FAMILY STRUCTURE ON ONE'S ADULT STATUS.
6. REDESIGN INNER CITY SCHOOLS SO THAT THEY ARE NOT IMITATIONS OF MIDDLE-CLASS SCHOOLS.
7. WIDEN THE PARAMETERS OF THOSE INVOLVED IN EDUCATION.

WITH HIGH HOPES AND GREAT AMBITIONS, THESE SELECTED SCHOOL SYSTEMS ATTACKED THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THEM. IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK TEACHERS REVISED THE CURRICULUM FOR THE "CULTURALLY DEPRIVED" IN LANGUAGE ARTS, MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES. CHICAGO CONCENTRATED ON THE PARENTS OF DROP-OUTS BY REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION, INTENSIVE ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE, PRACTICAL JOB TRAINING AND CULTURAL ENRICHMENT. CLEVELAND, THROUGH ITS "PORT OF ENTRY" PROJECT HELPED MIGRANT CHILDREN AND PARENTS ADJUST TO URBAN LIFE. DETROIT HIRED ADDITIONAL STAFF TO HELP TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM. PITTSBURGH INTRODUCED TEAM TEACHER AND PHILADELPHIA ADDED SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COMBINATIONS TO BRING THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CLOSER TOGETHER. DR. DAVID HOROWITZ, THEN AN ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS SAID:[2]

> IT IS TO THE CREDIT OF THE PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO BE IN THE VANGUARD OF THIS NEW DIMENSION IN EDUCATIONAL EMPHASIS THAT IS ATTEMPTING TO RAISE THE EDUCATIONAL SIGHTS OF CHILDREN WHO COME FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTS.

THE LATE DR. MARCUS FOSTER, THEN A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, SAID:[3]

> IT (THE PROGRAM) IS BASED UPON THE ASSUMPTION THAT HUMAN BEHAVIOR CAN BE MODIFIED IN POSITIVE DIRECTIONS THROUGH EFFECTIVE PLANNING, SKILLFUL TEACHING AND INTELLIGENT, PERSISTENT EFFORT.

PROPHETIC WORDS AND A PROPHETIC PROGRAM. THE FORD FOUNDATION HAD ANTICIPATED AND ATTEMPTED TO FORESTALL WHAT WAS TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT CHALLENGES FACING AMERICANS IN THE LAST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY: PROVIDING EDUCATION OF QUALITY TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM THE SLUMS AND GHETTOS OF AMERICA'S CITIES. UNFORTUNATELY AND REGRETABLY WE HAVE NOT SOLVED THAT PROBLEM.

DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFICULT THE TASK IS, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT EDUCATION CHALLENGES EACH OF US DAILY. FOR 63.8 MILLION AMERICANS, EDUCATION IS A PRIMARY ACTIVITY. THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 60.4 MILLION STUDENTS, 3.1 MILLION TEACHERS AND THOUSANDS OF OTHER EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL. THREE OUT OF EVERY TEN AGENCIES ARE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND THIS MEANS THAT, AS A NATION, WE HAVE A TREMENDOUS HUMAN AND MATERIAL INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION. CONSEQUENTLY, WE NEED TO WORK AT NOT WASTING ANY OF SUCH A VALUABLE RESOURCE.

BUT OUR SITUATION IS EVER MORE COMPLICATED THAN THOSE FIGURES INDICATE. SCHOOLS AS ORGANIZATIONS MUST DEAL WITH OUR JUDICIAL, LEGISLATIVE, ECONOMIC

AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS. ALL OF THESE SYSTEMS ARE COMPLEX AND THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN AND AMONG THEM ARE UNKNOWN TO MANY, INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO SOME AND IGNORED BY MOST. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS AND OTHER SYSTEMS REPRESENT MANY BUT DO NOT ENCOMPASS ALL OF THE PARAMETERS OF THE CHALLENGE TO URBAN EDUCATION. AND, AS A RESULT OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, EDUCATORS MUST HAVE NOT ONLY THE UNDERSTANDING, BUT THE SUPPORT OF ALL SYSTEMS. THUS, OUR CONFERENCE THEME: "PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRAMS IN URBAN EDUCATION."

WHAT WE KNOW

WE ARE NOT COMPLETELY IGNORANT, HOWEVER. WE KNOW A GREAT DEAL. WE KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT CITY SCHOOLS HAVE NEVER DONE AN ADEQUATE JOB OF EDUCATING THE POOR, IMMIGRANTS AND MINORITIES.[4] DESPITE THE THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS STORIES, TOO MANY HAVE LEFT OUR SCHOOLS PREMATURELY OR POORLY EQUIPPED. WE KNOW THAT OUR GOVERNMENT IS DYNAMIC AND COMPLEX, THAT CHRONIC CONDITIONS IN THE SOCIETY IMPOSE AND MANDATE CHANGED CONDITIONS IN THE SCHOOLS. WE KNOW THAT URBAN SCHOOLS ARE MICROCOSMS OF OUR URBAN ENVIRONMENT. WE KNOW THAT THERE ARE NO SIMPLE ANSWERS TO THE PROBLEMS URBAN SCHOOLS MUST CONFRONT. DESPITE TOO MUCH RHETORICAL NONSENSE TO THE CONTRARY, WE ALSO KNOW THAT EDUCATORS CANNOT SOLVE ALL OF URBAN EDUCATION'S PROBLEMS. PERHAPS ONE IMPORTANT OUTCOME OF THIS CONFERENCE WOULD BE THE FRANK AND OPEN ADMISSIONS THAT THE PROBLEMS WE FACE ARE OF SUCH MAGNITUDE, OF SUCH COMPLEXITY AND OF SUCH PERSISTENCE THAT OUR ONLY HOPE OF DESIGNING WORKABLE SOLUTIONS WILL BE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS OUTSIDE THE FIELD OF EDUCATION.

MAJOR PROBLEMS

AND WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS? THE PUBLIC CLEARLY VIEWS DISCIPLINE AS A MAJOR PROBLEM. EVERY GALLUP POLL IN RECENT MEMORY HAS IDENTIFIED THIS AS A MAJOR PROBLEM, NOT ONLY IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENS, BUT ALSO, INCREASINGLY, IN THE REPORTS OF EDUCATORS. BUT WHAT DO THESE PERCEPTIONS IMPLY? OBVIOUSLY, TO SOME, IT IS A REACTION TO THE DRESS, INCREASED ASSERTIVENESS AND DIFFERENT VALUES AMONG MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. TOO MANY ADULTS ARE EITHER UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE CHANGES WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN OUR SOCIETY AND WHICH ARE REFLECTIVE IN OUR YOUTH. TO OTHERS IT REPRESENTS A YEARNING FOR THE "GOOD OLD DAYS" OF STRICT DISCIPLINE AND UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE; A WORLD WHICH PROBABLY NEVER EXISTED; AND, IF IT DID, IS VIEWED WITH HINDSIGHT THROUGH ROSE COLORED GLASSES.

BUT THERE IS ALSO ANOTHER REALITY BEHIND THESE PERCEPTIONS AND THAT REALITY INCLUDES AN ESTIMATED COST OF 600 MILLION DOLLARS IN SCHOOL VANDALISM, ASSAULTS ON STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS AND THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF SCHOOLS AS PLACES UNSAFE FOR THEIR CHILDREN TO ATTEND. THAT PERCEPTION INCLUDES THE FACT THAT VANDALISM IS INCREASING FASTER IN SUPPOSEDLY SAFE SUBURBAN AREAS THAN IN CITIES AND THE FACT THAT EDUCATORS' RESPONSES TO THE REALITY OF VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM HAS BEEN NARROW-GAUGED AND UNEVEN TENDING TO FOCUS ON DISCIPLINARY MEASURES AFTER THE FACT AND CONTAINMENT RATHER THAN PREVENTION. UNKNOWN OR IGNORED ARE THE SUCCESS STORIES OF PREVENTING OR REDUCING VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM.[5] THE FACT THAT URBANIZATION AND POVERTY ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT VARIABLES IN EXPLAINING INNER-CITY CRIME OR THAT DETERIORATING LIVING CONDITIONS IN CITIES ACCOMPANIED BY WHITE FLIGHT TO THE SUBURBS, EASY AVAILABILITY OF DRUGS AND GUNS AND A DECLINE IN FAMILY DISCIPLINE CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROBLEM, ARE EITHER CONSIDERED IRRELEVANT OR DIS-

MISSED AS MORE "LIBERAL NONSENSE," OR "SOCIOLOGICAL DRIVEL."[6] EDUCATORS THEMSELVES HAVE FAILED TO RECOGNIZE OR HAVE BEEN UNWILLING TO ADMIT THAT CHANGES IN ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND OTHER STAFF CONTRIBUTED TO THE GROWTH OF VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM, PARTICULARLY WHEN STUDENT BODIES HAVE CHANGED RAPIDLY FROM MIDDLE-CLASS WHITE TO POOR, HISPANIC AND BLACK. TOO MANY EDUCATORS AND PARENTS BELIEVE THAT THE EXTENSION OF STUDENT RIGHTS BY COURTS HAVE "TIED THE HANDS" OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN HANDLING STUDENT DISCIPLINE.[7] PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE FACTOR, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN THE FAILURE OR REFUSAL OF EDUCATION TO STAND UP AND PROCLAIM ENOUGH IS ENOUGH; THAT WHEN A SITUATION DEVELOPS WHERE 1% OR 5% OF THE STUDENTS MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE OTHER 99% or 95% TO LEARN, EDUCATION IS IMPOSSIBLE AND THAT THE MINORITY MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT; THAT THERE ARE RULES OF BEHAVIOR WHICH MUST BE OBSERVED IF ANY LEARNING AT ALL IS TO TAKE PLACE; THAT FOR THOSE WHOM THE SCHOOLS CANNOT CONTROL, SOCIETY AND ITS OTHER YOUTH-SERVING INSTITUTIONS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES. EDUCATORS, SCHOOLS CANNOT DO EVERYTHING.

ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

WHATEVER OUR PROBLEMS WITH DISCIPLINE, IT IS OUR FAILURE TO PROVIDE EDUCATION OF QUALITY WHICH DISTURBS THE PUBLIC MOST. OUR FAILURE TO PROVIDE BASIC SKILLS OF LITERACY--READING, WRITING, ARITHMETIC, SPEAKING SKILLS--TO A MAJOR SEGMENT OF THE SCHOOL POPULATION IS NOTHING SHORT OF A NATIONAL DISGRACE. HOW CAN WE CLAIM TO BE TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, COUNSELORS, SOCIAL WORKERS WHEN TOO MANY OF OUR GRADUATES, AS WELL AS OUR DROPOUTS, CANNOT FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT ACCURATELY; CANNOT PASS THE SIMPLEST OF EXAMINATIONS OR TESTS, CANNOT WRITE AN UNDERSTANDABLE OR COHERENT PARAGRAPH

OR EVEN A SENTENCE? HOW DO WE EXPLAIN THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO CANNOT CARRY ON A CONVERSATION WITHOUT INSERTING "RIGHT," "O.K." OR "YOU KNOW" AFTER EVERY TWO OR THREE WORDS?

OUR DEFENSE, TOO OFTEN, IS "LOOK AT ALL OF OUR SUCCESSES!" NOBODY TALKS ABOUT THEM. OR WE CANNOT HOLD YOUNGSTERS BACK OR MAKE THEM REPEAT A GRADE. OR YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO WORK HARD TODAY; THEY WON'T READ. THEIR ATTITUDES ARE BAD OR THEIR PARENTS ARE NOT INTERESTED AND WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE. OR THAT FAVORITE EXCUSE, THEY COME FROM BROKEN HOMES, DON'T HAVE A HOT MEAL BEFORE COMING TO SCHOOL; OR THEY HAVE SO MANY PROBLEMS THEY CAN'T CONCENTRATE ON THEIR SCHOOL WORK. A FEW OF US WILL EVEN ADMIT THAT WE THINK THE STUDENTS ARE TOO DUMB, LACK THE MENTAL CAPACITY TO LEARN AND IT IS A WASTE OF THE TAX PAYERS MONEY TO TRY TO EDUCATE THEM.

THESE ARE EXCUSES, NOT REASONS OR EXPLANATIONS FOR OUR FAILURES. EVERY CHILD CAN LEARN GIVEN APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION AND MOTIVATION. AND THAT IS WHAT WE GET PAID FOR EVERY TWO WEEKS OR EVERY MONTH. WE WERE NOT HIRED TO BE SOCIOLOGISTS OR PSYCHOLOGISTS OR SOCIAL WORKERS. WE WERE HIRED TO TEACH, TO TEACH EACH AND EVERYONE OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO ARE OUR CLIENTS. NOT TO LOVE THEM, ALTHOUGH THAT WOULD HELP; NOT TO BE THEIR BUDDIES OR PEERS, ALTHOUGH IT HELPS TO BE FRIENDLY; NOT TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS OF DISCRIMINATION, POVERTY ALTHOUGH ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO HELP WITH THESE PROBLEMS COULD BE APPRECIATED. WE SHOULD, WE MUST

CONCENTRATE OUR EFFORTS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING. THAT IS OUR MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE DIFFICULT, COMPLEX AND PERSISTENT SOCIAL PROBLEMS TOO MANY OF OUR URBAN YOUTH FACE THROUGHOUT THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL YEARS. WE MUST DO OUR JOBS WITH SUCH COMPETENCE AND SKILL THAT CHILDREN AND YOUTH HAVE A FIGHTING CHANCE TO BECOME EFFECTIVE, COMPETENT AND SELF-DIRECTED ADULTS. UNFORTUNATELY AND TRAGICALLY, THE DATA SUGGEST THAT THE POPULATION OF YOUTH MATURING TO SUCH A COMPETENCY IS DECLINING.[8] FOR BLACK AND HISPANIC YOUTH, THE FIGURES ARE NOTHING SHORT OF FRIGHTENING.

DISINVESTMENT

AS OUR DIFFICULTIES INCREASE AND OUR SUCCESSES DIMINISH, OUR SITUATION DETERIORATES BECAUSE OF CONTINUING DISINVESTMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE CITIES. AS OUR CENTRAL CITIES BECOME INCREASINGLY POOR AND NON-WHITE, TAX DOLLARS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OTHER SERVICES DIMINISH. IT IS NOT JUST THE LOSS OF JOBS, OR TAXABLE PROPERTIES, OR MUNICIPAL OVERBURDEN; IT IS ALSO A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE. THE MIDDLE-CLASS AND WHITE MAJORITY ARE LESS INCLINED TO SUPPORT AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL SCHOOLS WHICH SERVE A PREDOMINATELY NON-WHITE AND POOR STUDENT BODY. PRIVATE SCHOOLS ATTRACT THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF MIDDLE-CLASS AND AFFLUENT WHITES AND NON-WHITES. PRIVATE SCHOOLS BECOME A REFUGE FOR THOSE FLEEING DESEGREGATION, THE POOR AND NON-WHITES. CITY COUNCILS, STATE LEGISLATORS AND EVEN THE U.S. CONGRESS SEEK WAYS TO PROVIDE PUBLIC MONIES FOR PRIVATE EDUCATION. PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE CRITICIZED,VILLIFIED, AND HELD UP TO RIDICULE. TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS ARE JUSTIFIABLY ANGERED AND DEFENSIVE.

YET, WE ARE OFTEN OUR OWN WORST ENEMIES. CONFRONTED WITH THE STARK REALITIES OF OUR FAILURES, WE RESPOND WITH EDUCATIONAL JARGON, SOCIOLOGICAL NONSENSE, PSYCHOLOGICAL PAP AND OUTRIGHT LIES, EVEN WHEN WE DON'T KNOW WE ARE LYING. RARELY DO WE SAY YOU ARE RIGHT AND WE NEED HELP. RARELY DO WE TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND POINT OUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR CRITICS.

AND WE ALMOST NEVER ADMIT OUR OWN CULPABILITY AND INADEQUACIES. PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE WE TOO HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN SCHOOL SYSTEMS WE STAFF, IN OUR OWN ABILITY TO IMPROVE EXISTING CONDITIONS. DO WE, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE THE GUTS TO SAY TO THOSE WHO ARE LEADING THE SURGE OF DISINVESTMENT: YOU GIVE US THESE SPECIFIC RESOURCES AND WE WILL DELIVER AN ACCEPTABLE PRODUCT? NOT AN EXEMPLARY PRODUCT, BUT AN ACCEPTABLE PRODUCT. ARE WE WILLING TO DEMONSTRATE OUR FAITH, OUR COMMITMENT BY PLACING OUR OWN CHILDREN IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS? BY ACTING AS PROFESSIONALS AND HOLDING OUR PEERS AS WELL AS OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE FOR TRUE PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR IN CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOL BUILDINGS? DISINVESTMENT IS OBSERVABLE NOT ONLY IN REDUCED SUPPORT, BUT ALSO AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, IN SPIRIT, PERSONAL COMMITMENT AND CONTINUED HOPE.

ACCOUNTABILITY

THIS WORD, ACCOUNTABILITY, STRIKES FEAR INTO THE HEARTS OF MOST TEACHERS. AND RIGHTFULLY SO. FEW PEOPLE DISCUSS ACCOUNTABILITY UNLESS THE FOCUS IS THE CLASSROOM TEACHER WHERE IT BELONGS. THAT FOCUS IS NECESSARY, BUT NOT SUFFICIENT. ACCOUNTABILITY EXTENDS TO PARENTS, CITIZENS AND STUDENTS; THE ONE GROUP WHERE LITTLE, IF ANY, ATTENTION IS DIRECTED. OF COURSE, TEACHERS SHOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE. IF A CHILD ENTERS A CLASSROOM AT POINT "1" IN HIS LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE, IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT THE CHILD WILL BE AT POINT "2" OR "3" OR "7" AT THE END OF THE YEAR. SOME IMPROVEMENT MUST BE EVIDENT IF WE ARE TO ACCEPT OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS EDUCATORS. BUT IT IS JUST AS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO EDUCATE STUDENTS WHO ARE ABSENT MOST OF THE TIME AS IT IS TO EXPECT STUDENTS TO LEARN IN A HOSTILE AND DEHUMANIZING ENVIRONMENT. IT IS SHEER LUNACY TO EXPECT A SCHOOL SYSTEM TO SURVIVE WITHOUT COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS AND TAX LEVIES.

THE BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF THE TEACHER'S ROLE ARE COMPETENCE AND A BELIEF IN THE ABILITY OF CHILDREN. TEACHERS MUST ACCEPT THE FACT THAT MOST PARENTS WANT THE BEST FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND SHOULD RESPOND TO THESE ASPIRATIONS POSITIVELY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY RATHER THAN WITH WARNINGS AND PROPHESIES OF FAILURE. A TEACHER'S KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT MATTER IS LITERALLY USELESS IF HE OR SHE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE KNOWLEDGE CAN BE COMMUNICATED TO THE STUDENTS AND THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF LEARNING BEYOND THE LIMITS OF CERTAIN IMPOSED EXPECTATIONS. TEACHERS MUST INSIST UPON HIGH STANDARDS FOR THEIR STUDENTS AND MUST ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR INSURING THAT THOSE WHO PASS THROUGH KNOW MORE AND CAN COPE BETTER AS A RESULT OF HAVING BEEN IN SCHOOL.

THERE ARE, OF COURSE, A NUMBER OF THINGS WHICH PARENTS CAN AND MUST DO TOWARD THIS END. MOST OBVIOUSLY, PARENTS CAN SUPPORT TAX LEVIES AND CAN ENCOURAGE GENERAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT. PARENTS MUST ALSO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR STAFF MEMBERS WHEN THEY ARE IN NEED AND WHEN THEY ARE RIGHT. THERE ARE NUMEROUS INSTANCES WHEN STAFF MEMBERS WHO ARE DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION ENCOUNTER RESISTANCE FROM OTHER SOURCES WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM; FOR POLICY REASONS, FOR PERSONAL REASONS, AND FOR POLITICAL REASONS. IN THESE INSTANCES, PARENT SUPPORT IS OFTEN CRITICAL TO THE EFFORT OF THE STAFF MEMBERS INVOLVED: WITHOUT IT, THEY ARE ISOLATED AND VULNERABLE AND THEIR ATTEMPTS ARE RENDERED INEFFECTUAL.

AS MUCH AS WE WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT WHAT GOES ON IN SCHOOLS IS APOLITICAL OR, AT LEAST, WELL-INTENTIONED, THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT SCHOOLS PERFORM A GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTION AND IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THAT FUNCTION THEY ARE SUBJECT TO ALL THE CONFLICT WHICH BESETS EVERY AGENCY OF GOVERNMENT. SCHOOLS ARE POLITICAL BEASTS AND THEIR AGENTS--ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO OCCUPY THE VANGUARD--HOLD VARIOUSLY THE PRECARIOUS POSITIONS OF DIPLOMAT, STRATEGIST AND WARRIOR.

PARENTS CANNOT SIT BACK EXPECTING OBJECTIVE AND INTELLIGENT SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION WITHOUT BEING WILLING, WHEN NECESSARY, TO TAKE SIDES IN SUPPORT OF WHAT THEY FEEL IS RIGHT FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY IS BY NO MEANS LIMITED TO EXERTING INFLUENCE OVER WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE THE SCHOOL. PARENTS ALSO NEED TO PROVIDE IMPETUS AND MOTIVATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME. THEY MUST NOT ABDICATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR CHILDREN BY EXPECTING SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS TO DO THINGS WHICH ARE BETTER DONE AT HOME AND IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. PARENTS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO LEAD STAFF AND OTHERS IN MATTERS WHICH AFFECT CHILDRENS' EDUCATION, BUT ARE NOT SOLELY EDUCATIONAL MATTERS: ADEQUATE DIET, NEIGHBORHOOD MAINTENANCE, HOUSING, POLICE PROTECTION, HEALTH SERVICES AND SO ON.

IN ALL OF THE TALK ABOUT SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY, IT IS THE STUDENT'S ROLE THAT IS MOST OFTEN OVERLOOKED. EDUCATION, HOWEVER, IS NOT SOMETHING THAT IS OR CAN BE DONE TO CHILDREN; IT IS SOMETHING THAT CHILDREN DO FOR THEMSELVES WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THEIR PARENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF. DESPITE THE CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS OF "MOTIVATION" AND "RELEVANCE", LEARNING IS ULTIMATELY A SELF-MOTIVATED ACTIVITY, AND THE ONLY CRITERION FOR "RELEVANCE" IS AS IT RELATES TO THE INDIVIDUAL LEARNER. TEACHERS CANNOT PROVIDE MOTIVATION OR RELEVANCE; THEY CAN PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH AND LEARNING. IT IS THE STUDENT WHO MUST DECIDE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY. NOBODY CAN EDUCATE A PERSON WHO WILL NOT COOPERATE IN THE PROCESS.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH HAVE A MULTITUDE OF CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS; THEY NEED SUPPORT, GUIDANCE AND WISDOM. THESE THINGS WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO OFFER THEM. WE MUST ALSO BE RECEPTIVE TO THEIR IDEAS AND SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR ABILITY AND MOTIVATION.

AT THE SAME TIME, YOUNG PEOPLE MUST BE ENCOURAGED AND SOMETIMES FORCED TO BE RESPONSIBLE. THEY MUST BE LED TO CLOSELY EXAMINE THEIR VIEWS, THEIR ACTIONS, THEIR GOALS, AND ASPIRATIONS.

DESPITE MUCH OF THE RHETORIC OF THE 1960'S, WE STILL DON'T HAVE MUCH OF ANYTHING IN OUR INNER CITY OR URBAN COMMUNITIES: PHYSICIANS, ATTORNIES, COMPUTER SPECIALISTS, PILOTS, PLANNERS - YOU NAME IT AND WE NEED MORE OF THEM. MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE LIVE ON A SMALL PLANET AND THE SKILLS NEEDED TODAY AND TOMORROW ARE FAR DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF PAST GENERATIONS. WHILE STUDENTS NEED TO RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RELEVANCE OF THEIR EDUCATION, THEY ALSO NEED TO DEVELOP COMPETENCE. THE LAST THING THIS SOCIETY NEEDS IS PEOPLE WHO WANT TO "HELP THE COMMUNITY" BUT WHO HAVE NO SKILLS.[9] WE MUST AVOID AND ELIMINATE, WHERE IT EXISTS, THE SITUATION DESCRIBED BY DR. KENNETH CLARK:

> CHILDREN ARE NOT MOTIVATED TO LEARN IN CITY CLASSROOMS. THEY ARE NOT HELD TO STANDARDS, THEY ARE TOLD THEY DON'T NEED TO KNOW HOW TO READ - THAT ANY LANGUAGE THEY SPEAK IS ACCEPTABLE. THEIR SCHOOLS ARE BRAINWASHING THEM INTO A SENSE OF INFERIORITY.[10]

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

EDUCATORS, PARTICULARLY URBAN EDUCATORS, HAVE A DIFFICULT TASK. THE VALUE OF EDUCATION IS BEING QUESTIONED TODAY AS IT HAS NEVER BEEN QUESTIONED IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY. ON THE ONE HAND, OUR CRITICS DEMAND BETTER QUALITY THAN WE ARE APPARENTLY ABLE TO PROVIDE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY QUESTION THE INVESTMENT THEY ALREADY PLACE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION. THIS IS A CONTINUING DILEMMA, YET MOST AMERICANS, AS HAVE OTHERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY, KNOW THE VALUE OF EDUCATION.

TOLSTOY[11] SAID: THE NEED OF EDUCATION LIES IN EVERY MAN; THE PEOPLE LOVE AND SEEK EDUCATION AS THEY LOVE AND SEEK THE AIR FOR BREATHING.

PLUTARCH[12] ARGUED: THE VERY SPRING AND ROOT OF HONESTY LIE IN GOOD EDUCATION.

ARISTOTLE[13] SAID: EDUCATED MEN ARE AS MUCH SUPERIOR TO UNEDUCATED MEN AS THE LIVING ARE TO THE DEAD, AND "EDUCATION IS THE BEST PROVISION FOR OLD AGE."

HERBERT SPENCER[14] ASSENTED: EDUCATION HAS FOR ITS OBJECT THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

DUBOIS, ALWAYS THE VISIONARY, SAID:

> THE OBJECT OF EDUCATION WAS NOT TO MAKE MEN CARPENTERS BUT TO MAKE CARPENTERS MEN...OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS MUST GRADUATE TO THE WORLD MEN FITTED TO TAKE THEIR PLACE IN REAL LIFE BY THEIR KNOWLEDGE, SPRIIT AND ABILITY TO DO WHAT THE WORLD WANTS DONE. [15]

FINALLY, THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY IN DISCUSSING THE RESULTS OF EDUCATION SAID:

> PERHAPS THE MOST VALUABLE RESULT OF ALL EDUCATION IS THE ABILITY TO MAKE YOURSELF DO THE THINGS YOU HAVE TO DO, WHEN IT OUGHT TO BE DONE, WHETHER LIKE IT OR NOT; IT IS THE FIRST LESSON THAT OUGHT TO BE LEARNED; AND HOWEVER EARLY A MAN'S TRAINING BEGINS, IT IS PROBABLY THE LAST LESSON THAT HE LEARNS THOROUGHLY. [16]

WE MUST TEACH AND REINFORCE THESE LESSONS ON THE VALUE OF EDUCATION; NOT BECAUSE THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY IS ATTRACTIVE TO US AND MEETS OUR NEEDS, BUT FOR MORE PRACTICAL REASONS. OUR CIVILIZATION, OUR COUNTRY CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT AN EDUCATED AND INFORMED CITIZENTRY. THE LESSONS OF TEAPOT DOME, VIETNAM AND WATERGATE SHOULD HAVE REMINDED US OF THAT REALITY. BUT MORE IMMEDIATE IS THE REALITY OF A DEVELOPING UNDERCLASS IN THIS COUNTRY; AN UNDERCLASS ACCURATELY DESCRIBED AS WITHOUT EDUCATION, WITHOUT SKILLS, UNEMPLOYED AND WITHOUT HOPE. A FRIGHTENING DEVELOPMENT, THUS, WHICH REMINDS US OF, BUT OVERSHADOWS IN IMPORTANCE, CONANT'S WARNING OF "SOCIAL DYNAMITE" IN OUR URBAN SLUMS.[17]

SKILLS

HOW THEN CAN WE AS EDUCATORS MAKE OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE PERSISTENT PROBLEMS OF URBAN AREAS? FIRST, IT SEEMS TO ME, WE MUST CONCENTRATE OUR RESOURCES, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING SCHOOLS. BY THIS I DO NOT MEAN JUST TEACHING PEOPLE TO READ, WRITE AND FIGURE. ALTHOUGH THESE THINGS ARE IMPORTANT, MY MEANING IS DIRECTED TO THE CLASSIC DEFINITION OF SCHOOL: DISTINCTION AND KNOWLEDGE, THE ABILITY TO USE ONE'S KNOWLEDGE READILY IN EXECUTING PERFORMANCE. IT IS A LEARNED POWER OF DOING A THING EXPERTLY; A DEVELOPED APTITUDE OR ABILITY. EVEN THE ARCHAIC DEFINITION OF SKILL IS CLOSER TO MY MEANING: IT MEANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, TO MATTER. UNDER THIS DEFINITION, EDUCATION WOULD DEMONSTRATE THAT KNOWLEDGE IS LEARNED, THAT APTITUDES AND ABILITIES ARE DEVELOPED AND THAT THE ULTIMATE VALUE OF ACQUIRING SUCH SKILL IS TO USE IT EFFECTIVELY AND READILY IN EXECUTING OR PERFORMING A GIVEN TASK. ONE WOULD THEREFORE SEEK AND ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AS A MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING SOMETHING HE OR SHE WANTED OR NEEDED TO DO.

EMPOWERMENT

ACQUISITION OF SKILLS LEADS LOGICALLY AND PROGRESSIVELY TO EMPOWERMENT WHICH IN MY DEFINITION MEANS TO ENABLE; TO MAKE ONE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING. THIS DEFINITION IMPLIES, IN FACT MANDATES, THE MEANS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR DOING. IT SPEAKS NOT ONLY TO INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT, BUT TO GROUP EMPOWERMENT. FOR THE POOR, THE OPPRESSED, THE ALIENATED, AND MINORITIES, INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT IS NOT ENOUGH. IT IS IMPORTANT, EVEN CRUCIAL, BUT NOT ENOUGH. IF EACH OF US HAS TO GROW AND DEVELOP AT THE EXPENSE OF OUR FELLOW MAN, IT IS A SHALLOW ACCOMPLISHMENT AND ULTIMATELY SELF-DEFEATING. FOR THOSE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LADDER, INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT IS AT BEST EPHEMERAL AND AT WORST A DELUSION. IN THIS PERIOD OF MANKIND'S HISTORY WHEN FORMERLY POWERLESS AND "BACKWARD" PEOPLES CAN WISH A SINGLE DECISION--THE OIL CRISIS--OR THROUGH A SINGLE EVENT--THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION--ALTER THE BEHAVIOR AND FUNCTIONING OF EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL NATIONS, IT SHOULD BE CLEAR THAT THE DESTINY OF EVERY AMERICAN, INDEED EVERY HUMAN BEING, IS ULTIMATELY TIED TO THE DESTINY OF ALL MANKIND. FOR MINORITIES AND THE POOR, IT IS APPARENT THAT HISTORY AFFORDS AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT OUR DESTINIES ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED. FOR THE AFFLUENT AND THE POWERFUL, THE MAINTENANCE OF THEIR PRIVILEGE, STATUS, STABILITY AND WELL-BEING MEANS THAT GENUINE EMPOWERMENT MUST BE A GROUP PHENOMENON, A GROUP GOAL IN POLITICS, IN ECONOMICS, IN SOCIAL POLICY.

HUMANENESS

OUR MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION CAN BE TO INFUSE EDUCATION WITH HUMANENESS. EDUCATION IN THIS CONTEXT IS MARKED BY COMPASSION, BY SYMPATHY AND CONSIDERATION FOR OTHER HUMAN BEINGS, ALL HUMAN BEINGS.

EDUCATION IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE DOCTRINE ON WHY OUR LIFE CENTERED ON HUMAN INTERESTS AND VALUES. THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY ASSERTS THE DIGNITY AND GROWTH OF MAN AND HIS CAPACITY FOR SELF-REALIZATION. EDUCATION IN THIS CONTEXT OPENLY AND PROUDLY ASSERTS ITS CONCERN FOR THE CENTRALITY OF HUMAN VALUES. IT ASSERTS THAT WEALTH, STATUS, POWER, CONTROL, CREDENTIALS AND INTELLECT ARE IMPORTANT, BUT SECONDARY TO COMPASSION, SYMPATHY AND CONSIDERATION FOR OTHER HUMAN BEINGS. IT ASSERTS THAT A PERSON MUST BE JUDGED FIRST BY HIS ESSENTIAL HUMANITY THAT EACH PERSON IRRESPECTIVE OF HIS OR HER STATUS, AGE, SEX, RACE, OR RELIGION HAS AN ESSENTIAL WORTH AND DIGNITY. EACH LIFE IS PRECIOUS AND IS THEREFORE TO BE RESPECTED AND PROTECTED. IT ASSERTS THAT EACH HUMAN BEING HAS NOT ONLY THE CAPACITY, BUT THE RIGHT TO SELF-REALIZATION. THE ARROGANCE OF INTELLECT IS THUS MITIGATED AND PLACED IN PERSPECTIVE. AS SIDNEY J. ADAMS ONCE OBSERVED: "THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SOCIETY WITH TOO FEW INTELLIGENT PEOPLE, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SOCIETY WITH ENOUGH GOOD PEOPLE.[18]

SKILLS, EMPOWERMENT, AND HUMANNESS. THINK WHAT OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM COULD BE IF EVERY EDUCATOR CHOSE THESE AS PRIORITIES, DEVOTED THEIR BEST EFFORTS TO THESE AND LET OTHERS DO WHAT THEY COULD AND SHOULD DO. PARENTS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES WOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE TOTAL PROCESS AND EACH WOULD HAVE ITS UNIQUE AND SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY. IT IS TIME, IT SEEMS TO ME, TO MOVE BEYOND RHETORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL BATTLES. NO SINGLE PERSON OR INSTITUTION HAS A MONOPOLY ON TRUTH, HONESTY OR PROGRAMS. OUR CHOICES ARE NOT BETWEEN DESEGREGATION OR INTEGRATION, OPEN CLASSROOMS OR CONVENTIONAL PROGRAMS, ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OR CONVENTIONAL SCHOOLS. OUR REAL CHOICE IS TO DECIDE WHAT QUALITY EDUCATION MUST INCLUDE AND ACT UPON THAT, AS AN

ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUING TO REACT AND FIGHT AGAINST A SYSTEM WHICH MORE OFTEN THAN NOT IGNORES OR DENIGRATES HUMAN VALUES. ALMOST EVERY PROGRAM WORKS FOR SOME CHILDREN AND YOUTH; ALMOST EVERY SCHOOL HAS SOME SUCCESSES ALONG WITH THE FAILURES, ALMOST EVERY EDUCATOR DOES SOMETHING WELL; ALMOST EVERY TEACHER WANTS CHILDREN TO LEARN AND BE SUCCESSFUL. THE QUESTION IS HOW DO WE ACCOMPLISH IT.

WHATEVER OUR LEVEL OF SKILL OR EDUCATION, WHATEVER OUR EXPERIENCE, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THE YOUNG LEARN BY EXAMPLE AS WELL AS PRECEPT, FROM BEHAVIOR AS WELL AS PREACHMENT. IT IS NOT INNOVATIONS OR MATERIALS OR TECHNOLOGY WE NEED. PROFESSOR ARROWSMITH FORMERLY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SAID IT BEST:

> IT IS <u>MEN</u> WE NEED, NOT PROGRAMS. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A STUDENT TO GO FROM KINDERGARTEN TO GRADUATE SCHOOL WITHOUT EVER MEETING A <u>MAN</u>...A MAN WHO MIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME GIVE HIM THE ONLY PROFOUND MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING, THE HOPE OF BECOMING A BETTER MAN...
>
> WHEN STUDENTS SAY THAT THEIR EDUCATION IS IRRELEVANT, THEY MEAN ABOVE ALL THE ABSENCE OF THIS MAN. WITHOUT HIM, THE WHOLE ENTERPRISE IS ASHES, SHEER PHONINESS.
>
> THIS IS WHY SUTDENTS ARE SO QUICK, AND SO RIGHT, TO SUSPECT A FATAL HYPOCRISY IN THE TEACHER WHO LIVES WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST RELATION TO WHAT HE KNOWS, WHOSE TEXTS ARE WHOLLY DIVORCED FROM LIFE, FROM HUMAN LIFE. WHAT STUDENTS WANT IS NOT NECESSARILY WHAT THEY NEED: BUT IN THIS CASE IT IS THE STUDENTS WHO ARE RIGHT...
>
> THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION IS ENOUGH TO MAKE STRONG MEN WEEP. HERE, UNMISTAKABLY, WE HAVE STUDENTS CONCERNED TO ASK THE CRUCIAL QUESTIONS--IDENTITY, MEANING, RIGHT OR WRONG,

THE GOOD LIFE--AND THEY GET IN RESPONSE NOT BREAD, BUT A STONE. HERE WE HAVE A GENERATION BLESSEDLY CAPABLE OF MORAL COURAGE, AND IT IS THE BITTEREST OF ANOMALIES THAT THE HUMANITIES SHOULD BE DYING AMONG STUDENTS CAPABLE OF MORAL OUTRAGE IN A MORALLY OUTRAGEOUS WORLD.

ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION THE RESPONSE OF THE UNIVERSITY TO THIS PROFOUND HUNGER FOR EDUCATION, FOR COMPELLING EXAMPLES OF HUMAN COURAGE AND COMPASSIONATE INTELLIGENCE, HAS BEEN MEAN, PAROCHIAL, UNCOMPREHENDING, OR COLD.

ABOVE ALL COLD. THE WASTE IN SHEER HUMAN INCENTIVE, IN DISAPPOINTMENT IN MATTERS WHERE DISAPPOINTMENT IS DESTRUCTIVE AND FATAL, IS APPALLING...WHAT, I FIND MYSELF WONDERING, WOULD EDUCATION BE LIKE IF HUMANISTS AND TEACHERS HAD THE COURAGE OF THEIR TRADITIONS AND DARED TO FACE THEIR STUDENTS AS MEN IN WHOM THEIR STUDIES AND TEXTS FOUND WORTH, OR AT LEAST ATTEMPTED EMBODIMENT.[19]

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS IN EDUCATION WILL HAVE NO MEANING UNTIL AND UNLESS THE SEVERAL SECTORS--SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY AND HOME--DEVELOP CONSENSUS ON:

WHAT WE WANT FOR EDUCATION

WHAT WE NEED FOR EDUCATION

WHAT WE HAVE THE CAPACITY AND WILL TO DO.

AS DR. ARTHUR JEFFERSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS SAID:

SCHOOLS DO NOT EXIST APART FROM COMMUNITIES. SCHOOLS REFLECT THEIR COMMUNITIES, ARE IMBEDDED IN THEM AND DRAW SUBSTANCE FROM THEM. THE PROBLEMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT, CRIME, URBAN BLIGHT AND DEPRIVATION COME TO SCHOOL WITH THE STUDENTS. BUT SO DO STRENGTHS, THE HOPES AND YES, THE SOUL OF OUR COMMUNITIES. SCHOOLS CAN MAKE THESE PROBLEMS WORSE OR SCHOOLS CAN HELP OVERCOME THEM. SCHOOLS CAN BUILD ON THESE STRENGTHS OR SCHOOLS CAN CRUSH THEM.[20]

I MIGHT ADD, SO CAN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATORS, THE CHOICE IS OURS. WE CAN HELP TO SHAPE OUR OWN FUTURE. LET'S DO IT.

FOOTNOTES

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12. Plutarch, Morals of the Training of Children.

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19. William Arrowsmith, "The Future of Teaching," The Public Interest, No. 6 (Winter 1967), pp. 53-67. Copyright c. by National Affairs, Inc., 1967.

20. Dr. Arthur Jefferson, "Close Encounters With the Turbulent Environment of Urban Education," in Cross Reference, Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company, Vol. 1, No. 3, May/June, 1978, p. 267.